

RI State Conservation Committee
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FARM, FOREST AND OPEN SPACE SUBCOMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, October 4, 2004

1:30 PM

USDA/NRCS Conference Room

Tom called the meeting to order at 1:35 pm.

In attendance were: Ken Ayars, Richard Hart, Ronald Fasano, James Savage, Ken Swain, Tom Abbott, Tom Dupree, Chris Modisette, Michael Pezza, Linda Cwiek, Suzanne Kogut and Wendy Hoyle.

RI FARM USE DATA

Ken reported that a State of RI survey had been completed within the last year on farm data. The results of the survey have not been tabulated. We questioned whether we feel we can go ahead and review farmland values without this data. The USDA 5-yr census has been published and Ken can obtain that information with Vicky's

assistance. It was decided that Ken Swain and Tom Abbott will work on extracting the information that the subcommittee needs from the RI Farm Use Data survey. The results of the RI Farm Use Data and the USDA 5-yr rental survey will be available for our next meeting.

GOLF COURSE ISSUES

Tom had received a letter from the chairman of the Tax Assessment Board of Review from the Town of Portsmouth regarding the concern for golf courses being designated as open space. Tom responded that golf courses were never intended to be in the open space program being that the land does not function as an undeveloped wildlife habitat. Tom also went on to explain that each town could also come up with their own conservation easement concerning open space. The subcommittee reviewed several ways in which the open space law could be amended.

Recommendations for open space:

Ø towns develop their own 'current use value' regarding golf courses only

Ø have the term 'conservation easement' only apply when there is a conservation easement in perpetuity and owned by either the State or Federal agency.-should that include other agencies such as the Nature conservancy?

Ø have conservation easements in full force that extinguishes residential and commercial use

Ø have restrictions that can not encompass physical development of residential and commercial use on the property

Ø have current use value apply only to the conservation strip, not the whole property.

Ø review the term 'maximum recommended values'

We discussed Chapter 252 99-H 5452A, which states the subcommittee can only recommend maximum current use values. We will review the open space law at the next meeting.

SPACIAL ANALYSIS PROJECT

Division of Forestry has received a grant in the amount of \$17,000 to develop GIS mapping that would include mapping of forestland statewide in the FFOS program. It would be of great assistance if the Division of Ag could obtain a grant to do the same thing with Ag lands throughout the state.

RIPERIAN PROJECT

The Rivers Council is promoting landowners to plant buffers along area rivers. There is an effort to offer tax incentives to landowners who do plant the buffers. The subcommittee is concerned how this would be accomplished. Such concerns voiced at the meeting were:

- would landowners apply for a conservation easement on the buffer zone;
- would towns include this land in their comprehensive community plan;
- would it be assessed at the 10% rate

Tom will continue to keep the subcommittee apprised of any results.

Ken Swain noted that in the Town of Charlestown open space land is being purchased at a higher value than land purchased for residential use. The conservancy is buying property with deed restrictions.

The next FFOS Subcommittee meeting will be Monday, November 8th 1-4.

Motion to adjourn at 3:40 pm. Jim/Ron Unanimous

ACTIONS

Ø Ken Swain and Tom Abbott to work on RI Farm Use Data

Ø Ken Ayars and Vicky Drew work on the Ag Census Data